

Safe Families, Port of Seattle

Keeping your family safe *continued*

Cracking cold cases with DNA

A new law requires sex offenders – plus those convicted of kidnapping – to submit DNA samples. Police and prosecutors wanted this because it's the best tool to crack cold cases where we have DNA evidence but no obvious suspects.

Rapists and child molesters don't commit one offense. They hurt victim after victim until we catch them, and many never get caught for lack of evidence. This reform will help bring many of these criminals them to justice so they can't hurt more kids and families. (House Bill 2713)

Helping victims of domestic violence

More than half of advocates working with domestic violence victims report victims who've been demoted or lost their jobs while they were dealing with the crisis.

This law requires employers to grant reasonable leave to employees who are victims of domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, or those whose family members are victims. Ten other states already allow such leave. (Senate Bill 5900/House Bill 2602)

Port of Seattle

Protecting taxpayers against waste and sweetheart deals

You may have seen the newspaper and TV stories about the Port of Seattle's problems with contracts. The state auditor found serious problems with how the port awarded contracts, with up to \$100 million of our money involved. I believe it's our duty to protect the interests of taxpayers, so I wrote a law to do a better job of preventing waste and sweetheart deals.

This new law responds to the state auditor's findings and make four main reforms:

- improving the transparency and openness of the contract process;
- creating common contracting rules, to make contracting more standardized and fair;
- preventing waste of taxpayer money; and
- protecting against no-bid contracts and sweetheart deals.

I based this law on the contracting rules that apply to all state agencies, regardless of size. These common-sense reforms should restore some safeguard for our tax dollars.

Our ports are a great engine for jobs, since Washington depends on international trade more than any other state. It's important for our economy to have strong, healthy ports to get our goods to market. This bill makes sure we're stretching every tax dollar to get the most for our money. We can't afford waste.

The bill passed the House and Senate with unanimous support. (House Bill 3274)

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State Representative
Geoff Simpson

47th Legislative District

Dear neighbors,

The biggest thing lawmakers do is pass the state budget. In 2006, for the first time in state history, we passed a budget and adjourned a day early. I'm happy to tell you that for years, we've been finishing our work on time and passing a balanced budget.

This year, the budget isn't just balanced – we put \$834 million in the bank for a rainy day.

Washington state's economy is doing much better than the national economy, but it's essential for us to be careful with the taxpayers' money and to be prepared for a downturn in our economy.

We scrubbed the budget to find that money to save while still keeping up with our state's growing population. The budget we passed invests in our schools and universities, creates new jobs and improves public safety -- both in our neighborhoods and on the highways we drive.

Other highlights of the 2008 session include:

Protecting our land – The House and Senate passed two major laws, the first to prevent sprawl and the second to create 25,000 green-collar jobs by 2020.

Safer streets and neighborhoods – We passed new laws and put money in the budget to break up street gangs, crack cold cases with DNA evidence and get drunk drivers off the road.

Preventing fraud and sweetheart deals – The state auditor found up to \$100 million in waste and sweetheart deals at the Port of Seattle, and that's our tax dollars they wasted.

This newsletter isn't big enough to talk about every law and issue. If you have any questions, comments or ideas, please write or call. Your voice matters to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Geoff Simpson".

Rep. Geoff Simpson
47th Legislative District

Keeping In Touch

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A balanced budget

Public schools

The budget puts an extra \$101 million for K-12. Some of the highlights:

- Better pay for teachers. Initiative 732 requires cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for teachers and other school employees. We funded the 3.9 percent COLA for the 2009 school year and put \$17.7 million toward the unfunded COLA that should have been provided for in the 2003-05 budget, but wasn't because of the economic downturn after 9/11.



- Fully fund the expansion of all-day kindergarten
- A \$4 million boost for school libraries and librarians, as reading is fundamental to learning.
- \$2.75 million for better career and technical education.

Colleges and universities

We protected the funding that boosted college enrollment by 10,000 students. New investments in higher education include:

- \$3 million for aerospace apprenticeships
- \$1 million for the e-Science Institute at the University of Washington
- \$1.5 million for education leading to high-demand health care jobs
- \$500,000 to convert part-time faculty at community colleges to full-time
- \$1 million for better child care

Health care

Health coverage for your family is becoming harder to find. To make it more affordable for all, we passed a number of reforms with funding in the state budget.

- \$2.24 million for more affordable health coverage for small businesses and their workers
- \$2 million for dental care for adults – often people with full-time jobs – who can't afford dental coverage
- \$409,000 for medical homes, to do a better job of making sure everyone has a doctor, nurse practitioner or other professional coordinating their health care treatments and prescriptions.

New local project

The state construction budget includes \$700,000 for a project in the 47th District – the 180th/240th park.

Protecting our land

Our state led the nation with green building in 2005, requiring state offices and schools to be built green, and now private builders are proudly advertising new houses as being green. It's not a detriment. It's a selling point.

We led the way with Energy Freedom in 2006, trying to wean ourselves from our addiction to foreign oil.

This year, we passed two major reforms to protect our land and create green-collar jobs.

Common-sense tools for growth

This is about moving away from suburban sprawl, a style of quick growth from the 1950s. Sprawl is the most expensive possible way to grow. It's bad for taxpayers, bad for the environment and bad for our quality of life.

If a city or a county wants better tools so they can do a better job of planning for growth while protecting clean air and water, then we should give them those tools. That's what this bill does.

A big part of this bill is figuring out ways to grow that mean spending less time in our cars. I know people care about this. They want to walk to work or a train station – rather than fight traffic for an hour or two.



It's common sense for the highest concentrations of people to live near vital services and their jobs. With 50,000 people moving to our area every year, we need to grow in the most efficient way possible.

This bill can give cities and counties the tools they need to help make that happen. Let's try something different, something that wasn't invented in 1950. Let's give people less time staring at somebody's bumper on the highway and more time with their kids. (Senate Bill 6580)

Creating green-collar jobs

Every day, the world is buying more green technology like solar panels and cars that get better gas mileage.

We passed a landmark law to foster innovation to make Washington state a global leader in green technology and the good jobs that go with it, just as we lead the world in jetplanes and software. The law we passed also measures greenhouse gases in our state, to give us a better diagnosis of the pollution problem in our state so we can do a better job of fixing it.

The goal of this law is to create 25,000 new green-collar jobs by 2020. To do that, we will identify industry and worker needs in the new green economy and address the recruitment, education and training needs of green technology companies. Our state is already a global player in biodiesel and solar panels. We have the right entrepreneurs, universities and workers to get this done. (House Bill 2815)

Keeping your family safe

Ignition interlocks for convicted drunk drivers

As a firefighter, I've been first on the scene to more car wrecks than I want to remember. Far too many people get maimed or killed because of drunk drivers. I've given first aid to little kids mangled by drunks and held people as they died. It's senseless, and we have to try everything we can to protect our families.

Every year, we've passed tougher laws against drunk driving. The problem today isn't the old trouble of ten or twenty years ago, when a regular joe would have too much to drink and get in his car to drive home. People today use designated drivers or take cabs.

The big problem we have today is with chronic drunks. It doesn't matter how many times we catch them, put handcuffs on them, take away their license or throw them in jail – they keep driving drunk and putting our families at risk. Our state laws now put the worst of the worst drunk drivers away for serious prison sentences. Yet we taxpayers can't afford to lock up every drunk driver forever. It's not a life sentence – they're going to get out.

The bill we passed this year gets smart on drunk driving. Ignition interlocks are a good solution. They've worked in other states. Here's what will happen: people convicted of drunk driving pay for the device to be installed into their cars. They can't turn on the engine without blowing into a tube and the machine detecting zero alcohol.

This bill also requires that out-of-state convictions for drunk driving be included when the courts calculate an offender's previous offenses and hand down a sentence. (House Bill 3254)

Fighting street gangs

Gangs are on the rise in Washington state – not just in our big cities, but in small towns and suburbs. To take back our neighborhoods and save our kids from getting recruited into gangs, we talked to police and prosecutors, parents and pastors. And we came up with a three-pronged plan:

- 1) Stop gangs from recruiting our kids – If gangs can't recruit new members, they'll shrivel up and die.
- 2) Rescue our kids if they're in a gang – We shouldn't give up on kids who are stuck in gangs and feel like they'll get maimed or killed if they try to leave. There are ways to save these kids, and we can do it if we work together and give families and neighborhoods tools and support.
- 3) Break up existing gangs – The way to bust gangs isn't to arrest the average member, but to go after the twenty-something leaders who recruit young new gang members.

The law we passed got strong support from Republicans and Democrats alike, and it's the first step toward tackling the growing problem of gangs. (House Bill 2712)